



FROM THE EDITOR

AND THE WINNER IS...

Every year Hollywood gets all dolled up, walks the red carpet at the Kodak Theatre and waits hopeful for an Oscar. Almost always a very entertaining evening in many ways. Usually there is some mild form of protest during the show. Often a meaningful reading of the zeitgeist is construed from the content of the winning movies. Mostly everyone agrees that the nominated films and actors are all good, worthy of the best in this category or that. One thing is for certain: when it comes to the best picture, whichever tells the best story wins.

However, what defines a good story morphs over time. When was the last time you saw *A Man for All Seasons*? It is often said that the winners are a reflection of the spirit of their era—future data points for a cultural anthropologist.

I often think about this when the IDEA competition rolls around. What can be said of this year's crop of winners and losers? That design has truly gone global? That design is in better shape now than ever? Or that there is trouble on the horizon? Maybe design can learn a lesson or two from Hollywood.

Increasing global influences on design are made evident by the sheer number of products and services appearing everywhere. More companies and designers from around the world seek recognition for their work wherever they can find it.



Photo: Rick English

Design competitions have multiplied enormously. However, despite a slight increase in the number of IDEA entries this year, fewer winning designs were chosen. Are there just so many objects of beauty today that sameness dominates and standing out is harder to achieve? Maybe the products that won, just like the Oscar winners, told a good story.

Good storytelling has always been a powerful way to communicate. The rise of the storyteller and the creative culture outside of design can be seen in many examples in modern culture. Here's one from master storyteller and attorney Gerry Spence trying to convince a jury of a different sort: "You see, if the paper boy came by, threw the paper and broke my window, what should I expect from him to make it right? Ten dollars?"

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Twenty dollars? Let's say 15 dollars would be fair compensation. Agreed? Fair. After all, he's just the paperboy...didn't really mean to do any harm but has to make it right, doesn't he? That is why, ladies and gentlemen, a judgment of \$240 million against XYZ Corp. is not only fair, it's more than fair for a \$10-billion corporation. Now, don't you agree? Yes, of course, I thought you might." In Hollywood, a good story has always been the currency.

Today, blogs can reach enormous audiences, and music libraries, TV programs and movies are now carried around on your hip. The ability to create and manipulate video continues to fall within the reach of more and more people as technology becomes more accessible. Those who harness these new technologies in the service of telling great stories will be at an advantage. Great brands are built and grown this way, but design itself is a bit late to the party.

Sometimes when talking about design and the new pressures of global competition the question arises as to how designers who practice commodity-level design in the US will compete in an increasingly tight market. Will it be like the classic story of two hikers faced with a hungry bear when one realizes that in order to survive he doesn't need to outrun the bear just the other hiker? Or perhaps more finesse is involved. Like a great brand, a great design is usually a simple story that people get right away.

What story will history record about the 2006 IDEA? That the world has gone global in regard to distribution and application of design and that higher quality design abounds. That this trend indicates the tightening of competition and the importance of standing out on other factors, i.e., business and innovation. And most importantly perhaps, the great stories of bottom-line, flying-off-the-shelf success, sustainability and social impact. These designs, told in compelling ways, will cut through the clutter and be recognized for making a difference in the world. Outstanding news, I think. After all, in many ways both directly and indirectly, a great design, like a great movie, can touch millions of people.

—Mark Dziersk, FIDSA

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